



# Effectiveness of an Educational Program on Health Promoting Lifestyle of Spouses of Veterans With Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

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## Abstract

**Background:** Taking care of veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is associated with negative impacts on the quality of life and lifestyle of the care givers, especially the spouses.

**Objectives:** The current study aimed at evaluating the effect of a health promotion lifestyle training program on the spouses of veterans with PTSD in Gorgan city, Iran.

**Patients and Methods:** A total of 63 spouses of Iranian veterans with PTSD covered by the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs in Gorgan were enrolled into this quasi-experimental study by the target-based sampling method. Subjects were assigned to 2 groups of experimental (n = 30) and control (n = 33). Eight 45- to 60-minute sessions of educational training were held for the experimental group within 8 weeks. Demographic data checklist and the Health Promoting Lifestyle Profile (HPLP) questionnaire were employed to collect data.

**Results:** The mean total scores of health promotion lifestyle and subscales of physical activity, stress management, health care responsibility, and spiritual development significantly increased in the experimental group after the intervention ( $P < 0.05$ ). The total score of health promotion lifestyle in the experimental group increased from  $112.93 \pm 20.63$  to  $122.52 \pm 19.36$ , while the total score of health promotion lifestyle in the control group changed from  $112.25 \pm 26.09$  to  $110.27 \pm 24.83$ . However, changes in the subscales of nutrition and interpersonal relationships were insignificant ( $P > 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** According to the results of the current study, educational interventions significantly improved lifestyle and health promotion behaviors in the spouses of veterans with PTSD. Hence, it is recommended to emphasize on training interventions as part of health promotion programs and improvement of lifestyle in care givers.

**Keywords:** Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Lifestyle, Health Promotion, Education, Veteran

## 1. Background

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a syndrome developed after exposure to stressful events, such as death or threat of death, war, natural disasters, and physical or sexual abuses (1, 2). Patients with PTSD re-experience the trauma repeatedly in their nightmares and daily activities and bear emotional numbness during the episodes. The total prevalence of PTSD in the world ranges from 9% to 15% (8% males and 4% females) (2, 3) and in Iran, its prevalence is 1% to 9% of the general population (1).

War is known as the most stressful event causing PTSD, which potentially imposes irreparable damages to the patients (4). Thirty percent of people experiencing war con-

flicts develop PTSD (2). In the recent decade, about 10% to 25% of 2 million US military personnel, who participated in war, developed PTSD symptoms within 3 months after returning home (4). In Iran, the prevalence of PTSD among soldiers, who were engaged in Iran-Iraq war was 14.9% (5). Distress and mental disorders not only influence veterans but also their wives, which might be attributed to the wives' caring role and permanent presence (6). Social relationship deficits, marital incompatibilities, job dissatisfactions, feeling guilty and helpless, low self-esteem, and depression in veterans' wives are some of the consequences emphasized by different studies (7-9). In a study performed on psychological and marital distress among the wives of Vietnam veterans, Renshaw et al. (2010) stated